

PRINTERS & SCANNERS

FAQ

Q I've just bought a second PC and I want to print from both computers. Should I buy a new inkjet with an Ethernet port?

A Few inkjets have Ethernet ports, and those that do, such as the HP Photosmart D7460 (reviewed opposite), tend to be expensive. You can share a USB printer between PCs using a USB network hub, but these tend to be pricy, too.

An approach that doesn't involve spending any money is to use Windows XP's built-in printer sharing capability. As long as both PCs are connected to your network, you can go to the Printers and Faxes folder in the Control Panel of the PC that the printer's attached to, right-click on the printer's icon and select Sharing. If necessary, you'll be given the option of running the Network Setup Wizard to configure your PCs to communicate with each other.

Once you've done that, all you have to do is select Share This Printer from the Print Properties dialog and give it a name. Your printer should now be available to both PCs.

Kat Orphanides

Printers and audio expert

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SAMSUNG ML-1630

★★★★★

£140 inc VAT

From www.pcworld.co.uk

Samsung's ML-1630 is a mono laser printer designed with as much care for form as for function. It's a complete departure from the usual generic grey or beige box. It's the smallest laser printer we've seen, at just 122x332x375mm. It's also very quiet, and won't look out of place in a designer office or your living room.

The ML-1630 is one of the most stylish printers we've seen. It's finished in gloss black and has a concealed button that pops the lid up to reveal the toner cartridge. Another subtle button opens the paper tray, while the output tray is a removable pane of clear plastic that slots into the front of the printer.

It doesn't matter how good a device looks, however, if it isn't fit for purpose. Fortunately, the ML-1630 met our expectations. With only a USB port, it isn't going to take the place of an office workhorse that needs to churn out hundreds of pages a day, although Samsung claims it can print 4,000 pages per month. Print speeds were a long way from being the fastest we've seen, but 14.3 pages per minute (ppm) is certainly quick enough for a personal device, whether at home or in the office and, importantly, it can print a single page in just 12 seconds.

We were pleased with the sharp, professional quality of both text and greyscale images. There was dithering on our photo-quality pictures, but images were otherwise reproduced with a good degree of accuracy. We noticed some horizontal banding across large images, however, particularly on those that included a lot of pale shades.



The status display is an array of blue LEDs. Messages scroll across this screen showing how many pages of the current job have been printed and when the paper has run out.

At 2p per page, print costs are on a par with those of most other mono laser printers. The starter toner cartridge will yield 1,000 pages, while replacement cartridges last for 2,000 pages and cost around £40. The photoconductor drum is replaced with the toner cartridge. The transfer roller, fuser unit, and paper feed roller each last for 50,000 pages, but are not designed to be user-replaceable.

Paper handling is limited and, disappointingly, the ML-1630 can't print on envelopes. Fortunately, its smart print tray is capable of detecting if you haven't

loaded the correct paper type.

The tray can only hold 100 sheets of A4, and no extra paper trays are available.

The stylish Samsung ML-1630 is a capable mono laser printer, but you're paying a huge premium for its looks. However, if you need a good-quality laser printer in an environment where either size or appearance is a key factor, this is the only mono laser built to meet those requirements.

Kat Orphanides

SUMMARY

- ✓ Innovative and compact design
- ✓ Good print quality and costs
- ✗ Expensive

MONO LASER PRINTER 1,200x600dpi, 16ppm maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE ML-1630
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 66)



Also consider...

SAMSUNG ML-2510

★★★★★

£74 inc VAT

From www.pcwb.com



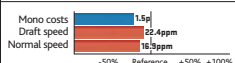
This grey laser printer may look a little drab, but

it's easy to set up and quick to install. Samsung's ML-2510 has a 250-sheet covered input tray and a single-sheet multipurpose feed slot, but it crumples envelopes.

It peaked at 22.7ppm when printing text, which is impressive for such an affordable printer. It's also cheap to run, with a cost per page of around 1.5p, yet produces high-quality text and mono graphics. It's a great compact budget mono laser printer.



MONO LASER PRINTER 1,200x600dpi resolution, 24ppm maximum speed, parallel and USB Hi-Speed interfaces
PART CODE ML-2510
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Oct 2006



CANON PIXMA MP520

★★★★★

£77 inc VAT

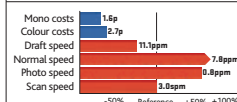
From www.ameiva.co.uk



The MP520 combines an affordable price with quick print speeds and low page costs. Even at draft quality, its text document prints looked great, while its normal-quality prints were laser-sharp. Draft prints were fairly slow, but normal-quality documents printed at 7.8ppm. Photo prints were good, too. The scanner interface doesn't list its top resolution of 1,200x2,400dpi, but you can set this manually, and scans at all resolutions were sharp and accurate.



COLOUR INKJET MFP 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 30ppm mono/20ppm colour maximum speed, 1,200x2,400dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed, PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE 2178B008AA
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Jan 2008



HP

Photosmart D7460

★★★★★

£132 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop

The Photosmart D7460 is the latest A4 photo printer from HP. While performance and print quality are largely unchanged from previous models, it has a few extra features to tempt potential buyers. A 3.5in touchscreen makes it simple to print directly from a USB flash drive or memory card, and the integrated memory card reader supports a variety of popular digital camera media formats. There's also the option of printing directly from any camera that supports PictBridge.

When you first switch on the D7460, an onscreen guide takes you through loading ink and paper before performing an automatic print head alignment. Impressively, you can connect the device to your PC via USB, Ethernet, Bluetooth or wirelessly using 802.11g. Unlike most printers capable of connecting wirelessly, the D7460 doesn't have to be connected to your PC via USB during the configuration process.

Instead, its settings menu includes a wireless setup wizard that scans for routers and allows you to choose your connection and enter your passphrase using an onscreen keyboard.

An alternative wireless printing option is Bluetooth. The printer comes with a USB Bluetooth dongle that you can plug into your PC and use to communicate with the D7460.

Print quality was excellent across the board.

Draft-quality text was easily good enough to use for everyday tasks, and our test document was printed at an incredible 19.7ppm. The only disadvantage was the loud printing noise in this mode. Our mono text documents were flawless at normal quality, but the print speed of 5.4ppm was rather slow compared to other inkjets of comparable quality, such as Canon's PIXMA iP4300 (see 'Also consider...' page 38). Colour print speeds were about average, and we were generally pleased with the sharp, accurate quality of both text and images, although images that used a lot of black came out a shade too pale.

The D7460 bills itself as a photo printer, and its print quality reflects this. It uses six inks, including light cyan and light magenta, to help create precise colour and shading in its photo prints. A separate photo paper tray is automatically drawn into the printer when you select an appropriate paper size, and is capable of holding up to 7x5in photo paper.

Photo prints had none of the minor problems suffered by our colour documents. Black tones were intense, and we were pleased with the accuracy of skin tones and the smooth shading on natural objects such as fruit, flowers and foliage.

We tried a couple of HP's different own brand photo papers to see which produced the best results and found that Premium Plus paper gave by far the most accurate colour reproduction, as well as excellent detail. However, we found that our 10x8in prints on this photo paper took a couple of minutes longer than our photo prints made speed tests on HP's Advanced Glossy paper.

Mono print costs are a very economical 0.9p per A4 page if you buy high-yield ink cartridges, but colour printing is more expensive at 6.6p per colour page. A mixed colour and black page adds up to 7.5p. The light cyan and light magenta colours aren't taken into account for these figures as they're only used for photo printing, for which HP hasn't released print costs yet.

With four different ways of connecting to your PC and the ability to edit photos directly from the touchscreen and to print on CDs or DVDs, the Photosmart D7460 is one of the most feature-packed inkjets we've ever reviewed. It's expensive and lacks the scanner of an MFP, plus it is twice the price of HP's D7160, which is similarly specified but has only a USB port and lacks a touchscreen. However, if you're desperate to have wireless networking, the D7460 is the best photo printer we've seen.

Kat Orphanides

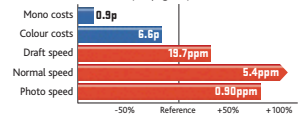
SUMMARY

- ✓ High-quality documents and photos
- ✓ Touchscreen
- ✗ Expensive

COLOUR INKJET PRINTER Six-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi resolution, USB Hi-Speed, 10/100 Ethernet, 802.11b/g wireless, Bluetooth and PictBridge interfaces

PART CODE CC247B
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 66)

DYMO
Cardscan Personal V8

★★★★★

£123 inc VAT

From www.misco.co.uk

Dymo's Cardscan Personal V8 is a tiny USB-powered business card scanner that accurately reads the data from virtually any business card into the address book software that comes with it. The data can then be synchronised with Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes or a range of other applications.

Scan times were quick and, although the software looks dated, we were pleased with the accuracy of the scanner's results.



BUSINESS CARD SCANNER
300dpi resolution, USB Hi-Speed interface
SOFTWARE REQUIRES
Windows 2000/XP/Vista, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 90MB disk space
PART CODE S0756280
DETAILS www.cardscan.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Jul 2007

EPSON
Stylus Photo R285

★★★★★

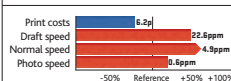
£60 inc VAT

From www.bluebat.co.uk

Epson's Stylus Photo R285 is a six-colour inkjet that can produce photos that rival the quality of high-street printers. Colours are lifelike, while shading and contrast are beautifully rendered. Some images looked a little cold at default settings, but this is easily corrected with the driver's colour controls. Its document printing is unimpressive and it can't print directly from memory cards or a camera, but for high-quality photo printing on a budget, this is a great choice.



INKJET PRINTER 5,760x1,440dpi print resolution, 37ppm mono/38ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE C11C691301
DETAILS www.epson.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Dec 2007

LEXMARK
Z1320

★★★★★

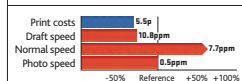
£33 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop

Lexmark's Z1320 is one of the smallest and most affordable single-function inkjets we've seen. Unlike most budget inkjets, it combines reasonable print costs and speeds with good-quality document and photo printing. We were impressed by its clear and readable draft documents. Our only complaint is that its output tray is a little bit flimsy.



FOUR-COLOUR INKJET
4,800x1,200 resolution, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE 20A0402
DETAILS www.lexmark.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Dec 2007



IRIS IRISCard Pro 4

★★★★

£110 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop



IRIS's IRISCard Pro 4 is a compact USB business card scanner that can scan a card in about five seconds. You can choose from several resolutions up to 600dpi and select from a number of paper sizes and orientations, including business cards in both landscape and portrait orientations and, strangely, 6x4in photos.

Once you've entered scan mode and calibrated the device, it can quickly and automatically scan cards as you feed them in. However, the scanner didn't always respond to the presence of a card and we often had to recalibrate the device when we restarted the software.

Each business card is saved as an image and displayed in the IRISCard's electronic Rolodex. You can then select your scanned cards and use the software's optical character recognition (OCR) capabilities to attempt to read the information on them. It did a passable job of this, correctly recognising data from even vertically oriented cards and assigning it to appropriate fields in its database.

Most of the data required some correction, particularly in the case of cards that used small fonts. UK postcodes were often incorrect, with zeros interpreted as the letter 'o'. It didn't always add all the phone numbers on a card to the database, and it was unable to file mobile phone numbers marked with only the letter M, which is commonplace in the UK. Like most card reader software, it was unable to interpret company names that appeared as images, and it had

trouble with stylised or unusually coloured text. The OCR didn't work at all on very pale text or on text on a dark background.

Once you've scanned the front of a card, you can choose to add the back of the card to its entry. This is particularly useful if you have a lot of two-sided cards or if you make notes on the back of business cards. The OCR software completely ignored our hand-written notes on either side of the cards, but they didn't interfere with its ability to interpret information printed on them correctly. It also successfully read creased and stained cards.

Once data from the cards has been recorded, the software can synchronise and export data in a variety of common formats, including as a comma separated value (CSV) text file and in Outlook, Excel and even iPod formats, among many others.

The IRISCard Pro 4 provides an effective way to get information from a large number of business cards on to your PC quickly. However, the software interface is clumsy and uncooperative, and the OCR was unreliable, requiring us to correct at least one field on every card we scanned. We prefer Dymo's Cardscan Personal (see 'Also consider...', page 37), which costs just a little more but was equally fast and produced more accurate results.

Kat Orphanides

SUMMARY

- ✓ Quick to scan
- ✗ Imperfect OCR results
- ✗ Poor interface

BUSINESS CARD SCANNER Software requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 300MHz Pentium, 128MB RAM, 65MB disk space, USB port
DETAILS www.irislink.com

CHOOSING A... Multi Function Peripheral

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

PRINT TECHNOLOGY: Inkjet
PRINT RESOLUTION: 4,800x1,200dpi
SCAN RESOLUTION: 600x2,400dpi
INTERFACES: USB
EXTRA:

Recommended minimum in grey

A multifunction peripheral combines a printer and scanner into a single compact unit, and also provides copying and fax facilities. This saves desk space and also money, compared with buying two or more separate devices.

1 Basic models cost as little as £40 including VAT, with specifications similar to those shown in grey above. These are OK if funds and space are tight, but quality and speed will be basic, and copying and faxing may not be possible without the help of the PC.

2 Spending more invariably gives you improved speed and image quality. These improvements aren't directly proportional to price, though, so read our reviews for details. Remember that running costs can outweigh the price of the unit.

3 Sheet-fed scanners handle multiple pages but flatbeds tend to give better image quality. Cheaper models make you choose one or the other, while pricier units combine both features.

4 If you'll be using the printer regularly, consider a laser rather than an inkjet model. These benefit from improved print speeds and lower running costs, and cost from around £120 including VAT. You'll need to spend a lot more for a colour laser-based machine.

5 To make the most of the standalone functions, you'll want decent front-panel controls. These can vary from a single copy button to something resembling a dedicated copier. If fax is important, then you need to check the device has a built-in modem.

6 Other useful extras to consider are memory card slots, duplexing units for the printer and/or scanner, additional paper trays and an Ethernet port to connect the device to a network.

Also consider...

CANON PIXMA iP4300

★★★★★

£54 inc VAT

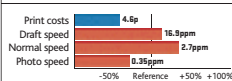
From www.ebuyer.com



If you need a budget printer, Canon's PIXMA iP4300 shows that you don't need to compromise on quality. It has two paper trays and can print on coated CDs or both sides of each sheet of paper. It's fast to produce text, colour graphics and photos. Print quality is high, with no trace of graininess, though photos are a bit oversaturated. Best of all, it has very low running costs.



INKJET PRINTER Five-colour inkjet, 9,600x2,400dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE 1438B008AA
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Dec 2007



LEXMARK X4550

★★★★★

£69 inc VAT

From www.oyyy.co.uk



Lexmark's X4550 is an inkjet MFP with built-in wireless networking. Our only real complaint is that print speeds are slow across the board. The only exception was our text documents, which printed quickly and at a high quality. The quality was similarly high for colour documents and photos. The scanner's resolution of 600x1,200dpi is lower than some, but is still more than enough for most tasks. It's great value if you want an MFP with built-in wireless networking.

COLOUR INKJET MFP 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 26ppm mono/18ppm colour maximum speed, 600x1,200dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed, PictBridge USB, 802.11g wireless interfaces
PART CODE 001410602
DETAILS www.lexmark.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Dec 2007

